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JEHOVAH SHALOM

"The Lord send Peace"

J. H. TODD

Some of the brightest pictures in the Scriptures have for their setting a very dark background, which adds greatly to the glory of the truth presented. That is the case in the instance when Gideon gave the name of Jehovah-Shalom to the altar set up by him. For the times of the Judges were dark and distressing, the people of Israel being constantly beset by enemies who robbed them of their corn and cattle and took them into captivity. In their distress they cried to God and He graciously raised up deliverers who overcame their enemies and restored them to their possessions, and brought rest to the land for a time. The whole history is a repetition of departure from God into idolatry, attacks by enemies followed by servitude; then in distress they cry to God, a deliverer was raised up and salvation from their enemies was followed by rest. The last words of the book—'There was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes'—gives the key to the history recorded.

It was during one of these times of trouble when the Midianites were harassing the people, taking away their crops and cattle, and impoverishing the people that Gideon was chosen by God to become the deliverer. An angel was sent to him while he was threshing grain secretly, to commission him to go against the Midianites and overcome them. The angel appeared to him in the form of a man and was not at first recognized by Gideon as an angel; but when he realized who the visitor was he became alarmed fearing he might die. The Lord however spoke peace to him and so allayed his fears, and that led him to erect an altar and call it by the name Jehovah-Shalom, meaning Jehovah-Peace.

Midian means strife, and their treatment of Israel betrays their character to accord fully with their name. The record tells how the people had fled to the mountains and were living in dens and caves and strongholds. When they had sown the land the Midianites came up and destroyed their work and left nothing for them in the way of food, so that they were utterly

impoverished and in terrible distress. When they cried to the Lord He sent a prophet who reminded them of the goodness of God in redeeming them from Egypt and in giving them the land as an inheritance, and then reproved them for their disobedience in turning away to idols. And then comes the story of the visit of the angel to Gideon.

What an occasion for peace and rest, when there was nothing facing the people but unrest and distress and oppression! For peace means bringing to an end all strife and conflict. Peace means oneness or the removal of anything that destroys harmony or causes division. In both Old and New Testaments the word signifies the bringing together of those who have been separated and making them one. This is exemplified in Acts 7:26, where the expression 'would have set them at one again' means would have brought them to peace or 'urged them to peace'. The word peace signifies fullness or wholeness, and therefore the absence of anything lacking; it has also the ideas of health, safety, prosperity, and friendship. The word 'friend' in the Old Testament means the 'man of my peace', in Jeremiah 38:22; and the expression 'familiar' in Ps. 41:9 and Jer. 20:10 along with friend means the same.

Amongst the Hebrews the common salutation was 'Peace', for the words 'greet' and 'salute' are renderings of that word in the original. The marginal rendering for the word 'salute' is 'asked him of peace'. In some parts of China the Christians greet one another with the word 'ping-an' which means peace. That is an expression of friendship or fellowship.

As in the case of the other Jehovah titles already noticed, Jehovah-Shalom is connected with an altar. The altar speaks of sacrifice, and that is the only ground of peace with God, for unless sin is atoned for and put away there can be no peace with God nor any fellowship whatever with Him. And throughout the whole of the Scriptures the teaching is that for the forgiveness of sin and the removal of it there must be the shedding of blood. 'Without shedding of blood there is no remission' (Heb. 9:22). Man as a sinner is at enmity with God, and in consequence is

separated from Him. That separation must be done away and man brought to God if there is to be peace. For as already noticed peace means oneness. Peace with God is not a feeling or experience but a position of union or oneness, and that can only be brought about by the removal of that which separates—sin—and that is accomplished by the cross of Christ. 'He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself' (Heb. 9:26). And when a sinner believes on Christ as his Saviour he is justified or cleared from sin as guilt and accounted righteous by God. That is the declaration of the Gospel in Romans 3, and so we read in Romans 5:1. 'Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God'. The Divine order is first righteousness, then peace. 'The work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever' (Isa. 32:17). We get this order also in Hebrews 7:2 of Christ, 'first of all king of righteousness then king of peace.' The important matter is for the sinner to get right with God and the effect will be peace with God. There can be no real settled peace until sin has been put away and the sinner justified. And perfect provision has been made for that in the work of the cross, 'having made peace by the blood of His cross' (Col. 1:20). The great message of Romans is the righteousness of God which He has provided by the redemptive work of Christ which is bestowed on the principle of faith apart altogether from works however good. Being of God's own providing it is abiding and eternal, and the assurance of that given by the Word of God removes all doubt and fear and gives a settled peace.

Jehovah-Shalom not only means the Lord send peace but that He Himself is peace, as stated in Ephesians 2:14. 'He is our peace.' For the Lord Jesus Christ is the manifestation to us of all that Jehovah is. Christ Himself is our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption, and all who are saved by faith are 'in Christ' and are also indwelt by Him. Every blessing received is but some expression of Himself. Christ is the source, the pledge, and the measure of our peace, and of every blessing with which we are blessed in the heavenlies by God.

In Ephesians 2 it is reconciliation that is the truth, and that means a change. We were by nature at enmity with God so that peace was impossible; and the law made that enmity manifest, for all efforts to do good or to keep the law only brought condemnation, and death. By the cross that enmity was slain and the law answered for the believer, for Christ nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:14). That was the hedge between Jew and Gentile separating them, and the removal of it by the cross brings all who believe in Christ into oneness and blessed fellowship. That is what the peace offering in Leviticus 3 typifies, the sacrifice of Christ procuring peace and bringing the believer to God with acceptance. That was the one offering in which God and the priest and the offerer all partook of part of the animal offered. Eating together is always the expression of fellowship, and in sharing the same food it found blessed expression. God's heart ever finds its delight and satisfaction in Christ, His well beloved Son; and when the believer's heart is occupied with Christ and delights in Him as well as all that His finished work has brought to him, he is in communion with God. How truly then we find that 'He is our peace'. Jehovah-Shalom.

There are two conditions to be recognized if we are to know experimentally the peace of God filling our hearts. These are trust and obedience; and the measure of our trust and obedience will determine the extent to which we realize the peace of God in our lives. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon Thee' (Isa. 26:3). The word 'mind' there is the imagination, pointing to one of the chief causes for anxiety and worry which rob so many of rest and peace. The words of Phil. 4:6-7 are but an expansion of what we have in that verse in Isaiah. 'Be careful (or anxious) for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus'. The word keep is literally 'guard as with a garrison', indicating a very blessed security. The fuller and the simpler our trust and the committal of our lives and all our concerns to God,

so much the more will we realize His peace possessing our hearts. In verse 9 of that chapter in Philippians we have an even greater degree of peace presented, for there we are assured that the God of peace Himself will be with us if the conditions mentioned are obeyed. The things learned, received, and heard and seen are to be done, and the God of peace will be with us. 'Great peace have they which love Thy law' is the word in Psalm 119; and in Isaiah 48:18 the words are, 'O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments, then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea'. There is no truer delight nor greater satisfaction than in doing the will of God, and where these are experienced there is abundance of peace.

This title like the others already noticed has a very distinct bearing upon the future of the people of Israel as a nation. Many passages in the Prophetic books indicate this, such as Isaiah 32:1-18; 52:7-8; Jer. 33:6-11; Ezek. 34:22, 25; Zech. 6:13; 9:9-10, etc. At the return of the Lord Jesus in power and glory His kingdom will be set up and He will reign in righteousness bringing to the earth peace. Israel will then be restored to their land and brought into covenant blessing with God, when they will realise fully all that Jehovah is as revealed in their Scriptures, and which they failed to know because of their unbelief and disobedience. Psalm 72 gives a prophetic picture of that coming time and points to the abundance of peace to be enjoyed.

Jehovah-Shalom, the LORD Himself our peace. Peace made by Him, secured to us by Himself, and realized in union with Himself. That is the witness of the altar, the place of sacrifice, pointing to the cross. For it was there that not only sin was dealt with, but there God meets the sinner and takes him up into oneness with Himself in Christ, accepting him fully and finding satisfaction in him 'in Christ'. What blessedness, peace, perfect peace, in a world full of unrest because of sin and wickedness; and to be realized in lives so unrestful and so apt to be anxious and to worry over the smallest trifles! But the secret is that it is not only of God, but, that the LORD Himself is our peace. God in Christ taking up the believer and making him one with

Himself, and imparting to him, Christ, as the supply of all need, having put away sin, the cause of all unrest and anxiety. That is the blessed message that comes to us by this title of the LORD—JEHOVAH-SHALOM.

“Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers, peace within.”

WORD STUDIES IN THE FIRST PSALM

PROF. J. LEO GREEN

The first Psalm is anonymous. It is apparently impossible to ascertain with any great degree of accuracy who wrote it or when it was written. The fact that date and authorship are unknown lends weight to the Psalm. It is timeless in its message.

In a few well-chosen, meaningful words the Psalmist sketches two sharply contrasting pictures. The first is the picture, of the happy and successful man; the second, the picture of the man whose life ends in abject failure. Let us examine these pictures rather closely.

I. *The Picture of the Happy and Successful Man* (vv. 1-3).

‘O the happiness of the man . . . all that he does he carries through to effective conclusion!’ *’Ashre* (‘O the happiness!’) is a plural noun in the construct state. It is an abstract plural, magnifying or intensifying the idea contained in the stem. It is derived from a verb which means ‘be or go straight’. *’Ashre* never loses entirely the original sense but it signifies much more than mere ‘straightness’. It embraces all that was involved in real happiness from the standpoint of the Old Testament saint.

Because of our innate desire to be happy and successful in life we watch with keen-eyed interest as the Psalmist draws the picture of the man who achieves true blessedness. He describes him, first, by telling what he *avoids*; second, by telling what he *chooses*; and, third, by telling what *he is like*.